UK-HyRES – Royce Hydrogen Accelerator ECR Funding Opportunity on Hydrogen Research

1 Summary of Call Details

Maximum Value per Application	£50k. This is HyRES/ROYCE contribution funded at 80% FEC
Funding level available	80 % of FEC
Call for Proposals opens	15th January 2026
Online information webinar	15th January, 11:00 - 12:00
Call for Full Proposals closes	1. 23rd February 2026, 09:00
Notification of successful and unsuccessful proposals	1. By 27th March 2026
Anticipated start date of successful proposals	Projects should start between 20th April 2026 and 1st June 2026
Project End	All projects must be completed by 31st December 2026. There will be no extensions to this, due to funding constraints.

Please check your eligibility for EPSRC funding at: https://www.ukri.org/councils/epsrc/guidance-for-applicants/check-if-you-are-eligible-for-funding/

2 UK-HyRES and the Henry Royce Institute – Joint research call

Hydrogen and alternative liquid fuels (H&ALFs), such as ammonia, are essential for the UK to reach Net Zero emissions by 2050. Hydrogen is a highly versatile commodity and energy vector suitable for use in many hard-to-decarbonise sectors where other energy options, such as electricity, are not suitable.

UK-HyRES aims to identify, prioritise, and seek impactful solutions to research challenges across the entire hydrogen value chain from production via storage and distribution to end use. The EPSRC has awarded £10.7M to UK-HyRES (https://ukhyres.ac.uk/) for a five-year research grant which began 1 June 2023. UK-HyRES has, in addition, secured over £8.0M in leveraged co-funding from industry, civic and other research partners and £8.1M from the Hub's core universities for PhD students and other targeted investments.

UK-HyRES provides a network and collaboration platform for fundamental research, and is a focus for industry, policy, and other stakeholder communities, to tackle research challenges that underpin the production, storage, distribution, and end use of H&ALFs. The Hub's unique structure has been developed to deliver maximum impact – focusing on four technical themes (production, storage / distribution, end use and alternative liquid fuels), and four cross-cutting themes (environmental, economic, social acceptance and safety).

The Henry Royce Institute is the UK's national institute for advanced materials research and innovation. Royce works with the UK materials community to develop solutions to national and global challenges. Royce is funded by the UK Government through EPSRC and consists of 11 Partner universities and institutions across the whole of the UK to bring materials solutions to market.

Royce Hydrogen Accelerator (RHA) is an entity within the Henry Royce Institute with a mission to facilitate and speed up the translation of technology that unlocks a materials challenge for the hydrogen sector. It does this by providing translation grants, training for starting up a business, introductions to investors and third-party technical assessments (https://www.royce.ac.uk/programmes/royce-hydrogen-accelerator).

This joint research call underscores the importance of collaboration and translation in research, and the importance of supporting the research leaders and innovators of the future. **We are looking to support talented early career researchers, either in furthering their fundamental research, providing seed funding to develop ideas, or in developing a proof of concept or prototype/demonstrator, with the aim of translating technology through the incorporation of a spin-out company or other means.**

3 Scope of the Call

3.1 Eligibility

- The lead applicant (Project Lead, PL) must be an Early Career Researcher (ECR), where ECR is defined as a postdoctoral researcher, application scientist (or similar) or a lecturer/assistant professor within their first three years of appointment. The ECR does not need to have a current role at the host institution, but must have the support of the host institution.
- The PL should not have previously received funding in excess of £100k.

3.2 Funding Available

- The 100% full economic cost (FEC) of your proposal can be up to £62.5k.
- Projects will be funded at 80% of FEC i.e., to a maximum of £50k.
- Eligible costs include staff costs, consumables (including items of equipment <£10k), travel and subsistence. Equipment costs >£10k are not eligible.
- The costing must be officially approved by the host University before submission of the application.
- All project funds must be spent by 31st December 2026. It will not be possible to extend past this date.
- A maximum of £800k will be awarded to projects through this call.

3.3 Timelines

- The deadline for submission is: 23rd February 2026
- Notification of the outcome of the review process will be 3 - 4 weeks after submission.
- Projects should start between 20th April 2026 and 1st June 2026.

- Projects can be up to 8 months long and must be finished by 31st of December 2026.

3.4 Remit

- The application should include mentoring (academic and/or industrial) to support the research and skills development of the PL. This commitment should be confirmed with an official letter of support. UK-HyRES and the Henry Royce Institute/RHA can help match potential applicants to mentors if needed.
- A letter of support from the ECR's line manager or Head of School/Department should be included to confirm support of the time commitment of the ECR as laid out in the costing.
- Match funding is not required, but the strong support of external partners in the field, including through mentorship, is essential.
- The research must be about the production, storage, distribution or use of hydrogen and alternative liquid fuels.
- Research into fuel cells and the production of grey or blue hydrogen is out of scope of this call.
- Research should not duplicate research already funded by UK-HyRES or the Royce Hydrogen Accelerator (see https://ukhyres.ac.uk for information on current UK-HyRES projects).
- Examples of research that could be funded include:
    a. **Improving supply chain resilience and lower cost** of producing, handling, storing and using H&ALFs
        - *Reduced use of rare earth minerals, novel membranes, novel manufacturing techniques, sealing and permeation reduction, increase efficiency, mixed feedstocks, recycling materials, proton conduction ceramics*
    b. **Improving energy consumption and existing catalyst performance** for production of chemicals and fuels which use green H&ALFs
        - *SAF, marine fuels, chemicals (e.g., ammonia, methanol), carriers (e.g., ammonia, methanol, LOHC, etc.)*
    c. **Understanding and improving reliability and durability of materials** involved in producing, handling, storing and using H&ALFs
        - *Life prediction, materials discovery, accelerated testing methodology and materials selection*
    d. **Improve safety and monitoring** when producing, storing and handling H&ALFs
        - *Low-cost sensors, hydrogen getters, H_2 purity*
- In the call, applicants are encouraged to be realistic in their proposals i.e. only include research that can be conducted in the time available and within the budget requested, be cognisant of risks and have appropriate mitigation in place and be realistic about the achievable impact and the activities needed to realise it. Proposals should be targeted and give sufficient detail that the reviewers have confidence that delivery is achievable.
- All proposals should embed the principles of EDI and sustainability and should include skills development for the ECR PL (and others as applicable, e.g. other ECRs employed through the project).
- Successful applicants will be expected to engage with UK-HyRES and/or Royce Institute activities as applicable.

3.5 Review Process

- Proposals will be reviewed by 3 individuals: 1 external reviewer, 1 Royce Co-I and 1 UK-HyRes Co-I. A simple scoring system will be used against the review criteria below. A panel will discuss the proposals following review to determine which will be funded.
- The PL will be informed of the outcome of the review process 2 - 4 weeks after submission.
- Proposals will be reviewed on:
    a. Quality and novelty and/or impact (research could be blue sky or translational). Strength of any partnerships. This criteria has double weighting;
    b. Plans for ECR mentoring and skills development;
    c. Clear plans for the research and project management. Ability to deliver the research and complete within the time and resources requested;
    d. Ambition to develop the research into larger, longer funding proposals with clear industrial or other relevance or impact

       or

       Ambition to translate the research through incorporation of a company or other means .

We are committed to protecting your privacy. Personal data submitted within this application will be processed strictly for the review and management of the award, in full accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. EPSRC-funded projects are managed in strict alignment with the UKRI Standard Terms and Conditions of Grant, ensuring the highest standards of data integrity and security throughout the project lifecycle